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THE PROPOSED PROGRAM OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON EAST TIMOR & INDONESIA TO BE HELD IN MANILA NEXT YEAR

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Indeed, the proposed Manila conference on East Timor is to bring home to Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, the East Timor issue. Of course, it would be more ideal to hold this in Dili, but a few thousand miles away may be good enough -- at least for now. The Philippines and East Timor anyway share some interesting things in common. We are the only two Asian countries with a predominant Catholic population and the only ones colonized by the two Iberian countries, Portugal and Spain.

The program evolved by the Philippine Convenors Group in consultation with our East Timorese friends will essentially tackle three dimensions of the East Timor struggle: legal, political, cultural. But we have tried to weave this into a cohesive whole with more workshops and cultural interactions. The Asian and Indonesian perspectives will likewise be given ample time for discussions.

The first day will focus on an update on the East Timor struggle from the perspectives of the major Timorese groups. A keynote address that will hopefully provide an Asian framework for the conference will precede this presentation. We are proposing that the Nobel Peace laurette Burmese resistance leader Aung Syun Kyi be our keynote speaker. She will be invited to discuss the topic "Struggles of Asian Peoples". Of course, we are realistic enough to expect that she will not be permitted by the SLORC to come to Manila for this. We pin ourhopes that she will ask her colleagues inthe resistance to come in her name. A comparative discussion on the legal basis of independence and self-determination struggles will also be included this day.

The second day will feature the " Current Indonesian Climate and Prospects for East Timor Resistance". There are proposals to invite either Abdulrachman or Romo Mangun Wijaya for this presentation. We will have to consult further our Indonesian friends. After this, we will invite the Philippine Vice-President Joseph Estrada, former Senate president Jovito Salonga or the present main progressive senator Bobby Tanada, to discuss " Prospects for Asian Solidarity for East Timor and Other Struggles".

The culminating day will be the plenary presentation of resolutions, plans, communiques, or what-have-you. Caucuses and press conferences can follow in the afternoon. The remaining time will also be a good occasion for the solidarity groups to meet. We hope that by this time an Asian network for East Timor would have been born. Of course, our East Timorese friends may also find this time an opportunity to also meet, discuss and respond to the conference outputs.

One burning desire that we in the Philippine Convenors Group have is to make this conference a time and venue for establishing, consolidating, and expanding our respective networks, concerns, solidarity and friendships. We look forward to a working conference that will be both concrete, hardworking, yet enjoyable, fun, passionate and loud-- so Asia and the rest of the world can hear the anguish, laughter and determined struggle that is East Timor.

So come to Manila next April and be part of this historic endeavor.
Come, and perhaps also, together we can rediscover ourselves.

TOWARDS A SOUTH-SOUTH PEOPLES SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

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Despite the demise of the Cold War, the world continues to simmer in conflict. Contradictions have festered over the centuries, but it is class discord-- the proverbial struggle between the haves and the have nots-- that has shaped the destinies of peoples and the boundaries of nations.

In the global arena, this contradiction has taken the form of the struggle between the North and the South or between the few affluent and industrialized countries, on the one hand, and the underdeveloped or developing Third World nations, on the other. In the midst of the Cold War, this contradiction took a backseat to the East-West conflict, a veritable clash of social systems and ideologies in which capitalism is pitted against communism, and "democracy" against "totalitarianism".

The end of the Cold War has brought to the fore once again the North-South contradiction and with it, the need for South-South solidarity and cooperation.

South- South peoples solidarity is the global vision of all those strongly rooted in their respective social movements, seeking to come together to evolve a concerted and complementary effort for their own as well as mutual liberation.

There have been efforts to develop this solidarity, dating as far back as the Non-Aligned Movement of Nehru and Sukarno. Even Julius Nyerere's South Commission worked for the realization of this dream. Most of these, however, have been initiated by governments and can only go as far as their national or even more limited political interests converge. The record of South-South cooperation has so far been dismal, with the South countries often more interested in fighting among each other for the largesse of the North.

The South is not only the peoples of the Third World. They also include within the North: the disenfranchised, the marginalized, the homeless and those who steadfastly remain in solidarity with the Third World.

It is high time that grassroots movements seized the initiative and took the lead in building and sustaining South-South solidarity. A South-South movement anchored on liberation movements, peoples organizations, sectoral formations, international and national NGOs, the academe and patriotic personalities-- is an emerging reality whose time has come.

Conferences, symposia, fora, exchanges, internships among and between South peoples such as this jornados and the proposed Manila conference on East Timor and Indonesia next year are concrete manifestations of this burgeoning South-South solidarity movement.

It is efforts like these that will engender a truly dynamic South-South solidarity and in the process help liberate our respective peoples. Thus it is efforts like these that need and require the passionate commitment, support and action of all honest, peaceful, just and liberdad-loving individuals and peoples of this beautiful world.